

Amendments to the Claims

1 Claim 1 (currently amended): A computer-implemented method of managing user information in
2 an instant messaging (“IM”) system, comprising ~~steps of~~:

3 using a data structure to record IM activity on behalf of a particular user of the IM system,
4 wherein:

5 the data structure comprises a plurality of entries, each of the entries
6 corresponding to a selected one of a plurality of other IM users remembered, by the IM system,
7 on behalf of an IM client of the particular user;

8 each of the entries comprises: an identifier of the selected one of the plurality of
9 remembered IM users to which the entry corresponds; a first date indicating when the particular
10 user last sent an instant message to the selected one; a first time period indicating a first inactivity
11 period allowed before the particular one wants the selected one to be treated as expired, the first
12 inactivity period corresponding to inactivity on outbound instant messages sent from the
13 particular one to the selected one; a second date indicating when the particular user last received
14 an instant message from the selected one; a second time period indicating a second inactivity
15 period allowed before the particular one wants the selected one to be treated as expired, the
16 second inactivity period corresponding to inactivity on inbound instant messages received by the
17 particular one from the selected one; and a current expiration status of the selected one; and

18 the first time period in at least one of the entries is different from the second time
19 period in that one of the entries;

20 upon sending an instant message from the particular one to any of the plurality of

21 remembered IM users, automatically updating the first date in the entry corresponding to that
22 remembered IM user to a current date and setting the current expiration status in the entry to
23 indicate that the corresponding one of the remembered users is not yet expired;

24 upon receiving an instant message by the particular one from any of the plurality of
25 remembered IM users, automatically updating the second date in the entry corresponding to that
26 remembered IM user to the current date and setting the current expiration status in the entry to
27 indicate that the corresponding one of the remembered users is not yet expired;

28 periodically evaluating the entries in the data structure to determine, ~~determining~~, for
29 [[an]] the IM client of the particular user, that is operably connected to the IM system, whether
30 any of [[a]] the plurality of [[users]] remembered ~~users~~ by the IM client should be treated as
31 expired, further comprising, for each of the entries for which the current expiration status
32 indicates that the corresponding one of the remembered users is not yet expired;

33 adding the first time period from the entry to the first date from the entry, thereby
34 computing an outbound inactivity comparison date;

35 adding the second time period from the entry to the second date from the entry,
36 thereby computing an inbound inactivity comparison date;

37 selecting a first-occurring one of the outbound inactivity comparison date and the
38 inbound inactivity comparison date; and

39 setting the current expiration status in the entry to indicate that the corresponding
40 one of the remembered users is to be treated as expired if the selected first-occurring one is prior
41 to the current date; and

42 for each one of the plurality of remembered users for whom the current expiration status
43 of the corresponding entry in the data structure indicates that that one of the remembered users
44 ~~determining step determines that the user is to be treated as expired, omitting this user when~~
45 ~~performing selected IM presence management functions of the IM system by automatically~~
46 ~~remembering that this user is to be treated as expired but not deleting this [[user]]~~ one of the
47 remembered users from the plurality of users remembered by the IM system on behalf of the IM
48 client.

Claim 2 (canceled)

1 Claim 3 (currently amended): The computer-implemented method according to Claim 1, wherein:
2 ~~the determining step further comprises the step of using expiration criteria~~ first time period
3 and the second time period are selected by [[a]] the particular user;
4 the first time period is different among at least two of the entries; and
5 the second time period is different among at least two of the entries. ~~of the IM client.~~

Claims 4 - 7 (canceled)

1 Claim 8 (currently amended): The computer-implemented method according to Claim 1, ~~wherein~~
2 ~~the determining step further comprises the step of selecting, by a~~ comprising enabling the
3 particular user to specify that ~~of the IM client, at least~~ one of the plurality of remembered users

4 [[that]] will [[then]] be immediately ~~automatically~~ treated as ~~currently~~ expired and in response,
5 automatically setting the current expiration status in the entry corresponding to that one of the
6 remembered users to indicate that the corresponding one is to be treated as expired.

Claims 9 - 40 (canceled)

1 Claim 41 (new): A computer-implemented method of managing user information in an instant
2 messaging (“IM”) system, comprising:

3 using a data structure to record IM activity on behalf of a particular user of the IM system,
4 wherein:

5 the data structure comprises a plurality of entries, each of the entries
6 corresponding to a selected one of a plurality of other IM users remembered, by the IM system,
7 on behalf of an IM client of the particular user; and

8 each of the entries comprises: an identifier of the selected one of the plurality of
9 remembered IM users to which the entry corresponds; a first date indicating when the particular
10 user last sent an instant message to the selected one; a first time period indicating a first inactivity
11 period allowed before the particular one wants the selected one to be treated as expired, the first
12 inactivity period corresponding to inactivity on outbound instant messages sent from the
13 particular one to the selected one; and a current expiration status of the selected one;

14 upon sending an instant message from the particular one to any of the plurality of
15 remembered IM users, automatically updating the first date in the entry corresponding to that

remembered IM user to a current date and setting the current expiration status in the entry to indicate that the corresponding one of the remembered users is not yet expired;

periodically evaluating the entries in the data structure to determine, for the IM client of the particular user, whether any of the plurality of remembered users should be treated as expired, further comprising, for each of the entries for which the current expiration status indicates that the corresponding one of the remembered users is not yet expired:

adding the first time period from the entry to the first date from the entry, thereby computing an outbound inactivity comparison date; and

setting the current expiration status in the entry to indicate that the corresponding one of the remembered users is to be treated as expired if the outbound inactivity comparison date is prior to the current date; and

for each one of the plurality of remembered users for whom the current expiration status of the corresponding entry in the data structure indicates that that one of the remembered users is to be treated as expired, omitting this user when performing IM presence management functions of the IM system but not deleting this one of the remembered users from the plurality of users remembered by the IM system on behalf of the IM client.

Claim 42 (new): The computer-implemented method according to Claim 41, wherein:

the first time period is selected by the particular user; and

the first time period is different among at least two of the entries.

1 Claim 43 (new): The computer-implemented method according to Claim 41, further comprising
2 enabling the particular user to specify that one of the plurality of remembered users will be
3 immediately treated as expired and in response, automatically setting the current expiration status
4 in the entry corresponding to that one of the remembered users to indicate that the corresponding
5 one is to be treated as expired.

1 Claim 44 (new): A computer-implemented method of managing user information in an instant
2 messaging ("IM") system, comprising:

3 using a data structure to record IM activity on behalf of a particular user of the IM system,
4 wherein:

5 the data structure comprises a plurality of entries, each of the entries
6 corresponding to a selected one of a plurality of other IM users remembered, by the IM system,
7 on behalf of an IM client of the particular user; and

8 each of the entries comprises: an identifier of the selected one of the plurality of
9 remembered IM users to which the entry corresponds; a first date indicating when the particular
10 user last received an instant message from the selected one; a first time period indicating a first
11 inactivity period allowed before the particular one wants the selected one to be treated as expired,
12 the first inactivity period corresponding to inactivity on inbound instant messages received by the
13 particular one from the selected one; and a current expiration status of the selected one;

14 upon receiving an instant message by the particular one from any of the plurality of
15 remembered IM users, automatically updating the first date in the entry corresponding to that

remembered IM user to the current date and setting the current expiration status in the entry to indicate that the corresponding one of the remembered users is not yet expired;

periodically evaluating the entries in the data structure to determine, for the IM client of the particular user, whether any of the plurality of remembered users should be treated as expired, further comprising, for each of the entries for which the current expiration status indicates that the corresponding one of the remembered users is not yet expired:

adding the first time period from the entry to the first date from the entry, thereby computing an inbound inactivity comparison date; and

setting the current expiration status in the entry to indicate that the corresponding one of the remembered users is to be treated as expired if the inbound inactivity comparison date is prior to the current date; and

for each one of the plurality of remembered users for whom the current expiration status of the corresponding entry in the data structure indicates that that one of the remembered users is to be treated as expired, omitting this user when performing IM presence management functions of the IM system but not deleting this one of the remembered users from the plurality of users remembered by the IM system on behalf of the IM client.

Claim 45 (new): The computer-implemented method according to Claim 44, wherein:

the first time period is selected by the particular user; and

the first time period is different among at least two of the entries.

1 Claim 46 (new): The computer-implemented method according to Claim 44, further comprising
2 enabling the particular user to specify that one of the plurality of remembered users will be
3 immediately treated as expired and in response, automatically setting the current expiration status
4 in the entry corresponding to that one of the remembered users to indicate that the corresponding
5 one is to be treated as expired.